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## ***Unheimlichkeit*: Alienated and Integrated Identities and Criminal Existence(s)**

ANTHONY AMATRUDO\*

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### **Abstract**

This essay argues that we should reinterpret Merton's retreatist category by using Heidegger's notion of *unheimlichkeit* (uncanniness) which relates to the claim that our consciousness and sense-making are grounded in our own openness to finitude. It will also make use of Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* which relates to the uncovering of a primal nature of Being (*Sein*). When we do this we note how the existential potential of this category are at once released from the bonds of an overly objectivised Sociology and open to the possibility of a richer understanding of action and motivation within this class of persons. It argues that we should make Durkheim compatible with Marx. This is if one allows that the empirical basis for Durkheim's 'social condition' is as set out by Marx. Durkheim was preoccupied by the micro-level of analysis and Marx with wider economic conditions of the nineteenth century. Merton was tied up with detailing the America of his day and with individualized goal-setting and means-ends rationality. By employing the concept of *unheimlichkeit* in relation to Merton's work we open up a new form of explanation able to understand the psychic and existential striving for meaning, that Heidegger terms *Dasein*.

### **Key words**

Heidegger; alienation; Durkheim; existentialism

### **Resumen**

Este ensayo defiende que debemos reinterpretar la categoría retraída de Merton utilizando la noción de *unheimlichkeit* (extrañeza) de Heidegger, que se refiere a la

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exigencia de que nuestra consciencia y toma de decisiones se basan en nuestra aceptación de la finitud. También emplea el concepto de Heidegger del *Dasein* que se refiere al descubrimiento de una naturaleza primigenia del ser (*Sein*). Al hacer esto se observa cómo el potencial existencial de esta categoría se libera de las ataduras de una sociología excesivamente objetivizada, y se abre a la posibilidad de un entendimiento más rico de la acción y motivación entre este tipo de personas. Se defiende que deberíamos hacer que Durkheim sea compatible con Marx. Esto ocurriría si se permitiera que la base empírica de la "condición social" de Durkheim fuera como presentada por Marx. Durkheim estaba preocupado por un análisis micro-nivel y Marx con las condiciones económicas, más amplias, del siglo XIX. Merton estaba comprometido con describir la América de su época, y con establecer metas individualizadas, y racionalidad de medios y fines. Al emplear el concepto de *unheimlichkeit* en relación con el trabajo de Merton, se abre una nueva forma de explicación capaz de comprender el esfuerzo de comprensión psíquico y existencial que Heidegger denomina *Dasein*.

**Palabras clave**

Heidegger; alienación; Durkheim; existencialismo

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## 1. Control followed by alienation

The argument that follows seeks to reinstate Durkheim's Socialism and look again at his work on anomie mindful of the need to see beyond Merton's attention upon simple material success and look again at Durkheim's idea of moral regulation. By Socialism I mean a critical concentration upon the material conditions that structure life. As well as rescuing the original sense of anomie there will be an analysis of what one might term, Durkheim's fatalism (Lukes 1973). There is a need to reinstate Durkheim's concern for anomie as it relates directly to a crisis in capitalism and away from the individualized goal-setting and means-ends rationality of Merton and mid-twentieth century America. We should make Durkheim compatible with Marx. For too long scholars have juxtaposed Marx and Durkheim and they have done this by contrasting Marx's notion of alienation with Durkheim's concept of anomie: in fact both thought excessive regulation harmful, though Durkheim tended to focus on under regulation. If the focus is kept upon Durkheim's, admitted undeveloped, notion of fatalism then we see, more clearly, how Marx and Durkheim can indeed be compatible. Late modernity exhibits both excessive social regulation which in turn leads to alienation and also a real lack of integrative restraint, which in turn leads to anomie: both existential features exist side by side and there is no contradiction in this being the case. Traditionally anomie and fatalism have been two separate treatments to the issue of social regulation. However, Durkheim does have a nascent theory of fatalism and it is to be found in *Suicide* where he lists fatalistic suicide in opposition to anomic, egoistic and altruistic suicides (Kushner and Sterk 2005). It is essential to note here that Durkheim understood suicide as happening when the force of collective sanctions is displaced by a loss, or breakdown, of moral direction; and when the actor is no longer concerned by the social collective. David Lockwood (1992, p. 21) has highlighted how: "...anomie means the horizons become abruptly widened so that aspirations know no bounds, fatalism refers to hopes so narrow and diminished that even life itself becomes a matter of indifference." We should acknowledge that fatalism is part of the Durkheimian account and it is an element in his, broader consideration of social regulation and then follow Steven Lukes in seeing it as akin to Marx's sense of alienation: both being essentially powerless states, though with Marx associated with capitalism and with over-regulation (Lukes 1967). The two views are compatible if one sees the empirical basis for Durkheim's social conditions as provided by Marx. The two are both concerned with social regulation and order but we should note how though Durkheim is concerned with a full range of human endeavour, at the micro-level of analysis, whereas Marx confined his ideas to capitalism and to wider economic conditions more generally. Moreover, in Marx alienation is not only a specific form of mentality under a given form of social regulation but linked to what he termed "self-denial" i.e. under capitalism individuals are subject to an external force which denies such material things as are necessary to our human essence. The concept of *unheimlichkeit* (uncanniness) will also be considered to furnish an explanatory description to the psychic and existential striving for meaning, that Heidegger terms *Dasein*.

It is to be noted that anomic suicides occur, according to Durkheim, when the usual power of the collective sanction is lost through a loss of moral faith in social direction resulting in excessive freedom. Suicide is an example of a serious lack of social integration (Taylor 1982). However, Durkheim also has an account of fatalism which though completely contrary to anomie, in that it focuses on over-regulation, should be understood as part of the broader treatment of social regulation in his work (Pearce 1979). Acevedo (2003, pp. 75-76) has stated: "Anomie and fatalism thus relate to the margins of human passions and the extreme form of social structure that each condition addresses. Anomie is a condition that knows no limits where. Alternatively, the passions of the fatalist are unmistakably constrained and "pitilessly blocked" by the enduring burden of over-regulation. The introduction of egoism and altruism completes Durkheim's complex

portrait of human nature and allows for a more complete evaluation of the human condition." It is very much part of Durkheim's account that by studying fatalistic suicide we discern the action of social forces which, in this an example, are able to estrange and alienate individuals. It would be wrong to argue that Durkheim's work ends with anomie and is unable to conceive of regulatory social conditions that dehumanize, and alienate, the individual. For Durkheim the optimal social regulatory arrangements must lie somewhere between anomie and fatalism. Moreover, this is an altogether more convincing position than that found in Marx. Marx could not conceive of anomie and therefore tended to romanticise the alienation inherent in capitalist production (Lukes 1967). It may well be that Marx saw himself, and is best understood, as a *heroic* thinker but Durkheim is best understood as a pragmatist in his treatment of social regulation and its attendant mechanisms. After all, individuals are, in fact, subject to both inadequate forms of social regulation, with their tendency to anomie, and coercive structural forces, which can lead to fatalistic rationality. All this is fertile ground for *unheimlichkeit*.

## 2. Social solidarity, violence and anomie in Durkheim

Durkheim understood Sociology as an essential antidote to the disorder and anomie that is endemic to late modernity. Sociology would be the science that confronted the disintegration of the social world: it alone would curtail violence and it would do this through a programme of moral education and *positive* socialization. For Durkheim the notion that violence was in some way useful, even redemptive, was rejected out of hand. All violence does is infect the social world and undermine social solidarity. In the Durkheimian account violence is to be limited through a process of regulation that internalized within the individual. Durkheim argued that there was the need for a moral code that is both bigger, and more important, than the individual incidence of the *self*. Durkheim thought of violence in terms of both its symbolic and actualized forms. Nonetheless, in the Durkheimian account, violence is understood ambivalently for in seeking to condemn its harmful effects upon individuals and communities there is a realisation that it has a definite role in regulating persons for the good of the *nomos* (in other words the customs, habits and behaviour that are constructed socially over time) and that punishment of those who breach necessary regulations by succumbing to anomie should be duly chastised. The Durkheimian project would be a moral one aimed at the regulation of the body and the mind. We note that Durkheim was considering violence in a variety of forms i.e. epistemological, symbolical and real (or actualised). However, he noted that violence was also a social fact and as such a perennial feature of *all* societies. It is worth recalling here that whilst Durkheim sought to reduce violence he nonetheless saw a role for it in social regulation. As Lukes and Prabhat (2012) have stated Durkheim gives us a: "picture of society unified around a common morality and ... without legal enforcement of its morals through the criminal law, there would be moral and thus social disintegration." Yet anomie is far more than a simple deficit in law or regulation. The concept of anomie begs deeper questions about how to structure the social world which bear upon political theory, as well as highlighting a pathological trait within individuals. Anomie is essentially a moral designation which exhibits a disintegration of the social bonds that preserve civilization (Durkheim 1984). It is a prerequisite for violence either in the shape of crime or suicide, which should be considered an essentially violent and destructive act (Durkheim 1984). The history of Sociology demonstrates how the concept of anomie has persisted long after Durkheim's death in 1917. Though, subsequent followers of Durkheim, notably Talcott Parsons, though true to his realism nonetheless systematically stripped the concept of any metaphysical elements that were originally intended. It have previously argued (Amatrudo 2009, p. 21) that: "Merton followed Durkheim but switched his focus from the moral regulation of individuals to the demoralisation that necessarily follows when individuals seek personal affirmation in material success. Where Durkheim had focused upon rapid social change, Merton focused upon the strains of succeeding in a materialist

culture." The term anomie became little more than an element in a typology, an analytic tool for the classification of norms and deviance from them. Anomie was freed up to be used in the analysis of any disordered social situation. It was Merton who re-wrote the concept of anomie most completely when its original sense (which related not to a crisis in late modernity and a failure of organic solidarity but to the birth of modernity) was replaced by a failure of agreement over legitimate, in terms of the dominant group goals (Merton 1993). The Mertonian concept of anomie is little more than a social structural problem relating to an imbalance between certain goals, that are over-determined and the accompanying means of achieving them, which are correspondingly underdetermined. As I (Amatrudo 2009, p. 20) have previously note: "*Merton emphasised the relationship between culture and social structure far more than anyone had done previously. Merton's primary aim was to discover how social structures exert a definite pressure on individuals to engage in non-conforming, rather than conforming conduct. He drew a distinction between culturally defined goals, which he saw as desirable, and the legitimate means of achieving those goals. Whenever goals and means are harmoniously integrated the result is a well-regulated society. 'Strain' is said to occur where there is a disjuncture between culturally defined goals and the institutionalised means of obtaining them. American society, argued Merton, overemphasised the goal of monetary success, relative to other goals. Following Durkheim he argued that the relationship between culturally defined goals and the legitimate means of achieving them, led to anomie and because the American economic system had built-in insatiability, in terms of the material aspirations it raised. In other words, anomie occurs within the social structure itself and is, in turn, a measure of the gap between goals and means in society. Strain theory, in this regard, is a theory with definite economic overtones.*" To be fair Merton was interested in the social causation of anomie whereas Durkheim more with the consequences of it. Following Merton American Sociology went on to use a version of anomie, as a measure, to scale and quantify deviations from the norm and in its wake criminologists invoked anomie to explain almost everything from petty crime to prostitution to alcoholism (Agnew 1995). However, in following the Mertonian anomie so slavishly the critical and, undoubtedly, political elements of Durkheim's original analysis were lost.

The concept of anomie became central to sociological analysis and very useful in that it signifies a lack of law or culture. If there is anomie then what form of law should we apply? How stable, or otherwise, is the state of anomie? In Durkheim the concept is straightforward if not entirely without its own complexities. Anomie is a state where all forms of social disaggregation could be put together (Sirrianni 1984). Durkheim sets out his position on anomie most clearly in *The Division of Labour in Society* in which he gives due weight to concern for social determination (Durkheim 1984, p. 5). To quote in full: "(Society) is the arbiter naturally designed to settle interests in conflict and to assign to each its suitable limits. Then it has the chief interest in order and peace; if anomy if evil, it is above all because society suffers from it, being unable to live without cohesion and regularity. A moral or juridical regulation essentially expresses then social needs that society alone can feel; it rests in a state of opinion and all opinion is a collective thing, produced by collective elaboration. For anomie to end, there must exist, or be formed, a group which can constitute the system of rules actually needed . . . this is what is called the corporation or occupational group."

The level of social morality is related directly to the level of anomie where there is a level of anomie social solidarity (morality) is undermined. Durkheim links law, morality and social solidarity in an unproblematic fashion and seems to be arguing that anomie is that which evades social integration. Civic harmony is related directly to social solidarity, and there is a nod to Thomas Hobbes here when he writes (Durkheim 1984, p. 39) of the state of nature: "... the state of nature of the philosophers of the nineteenth century, if not immoral is, at least, amoral." Durkheim, we must never forget, was a Socialist and it was his view that

individualism was all well and good but only so long as one's duty to oneself is in accord with the collective duties one has to the social (social solidarity). When the individual's aims and objectives are out of kilter with the social body then there arises the possibility of anomie and with it the denial of the social body; and thereafter the presence of violence, as a direct result of it. This is especially problematic in a social body cohering to organic solidarity, as Greenhouse (2011) has shown. Where there is increased independence as in organic solidarity (in contra-distinction to mechanical solidarity) there follows the requirement for heightened levels of social regulation. Anomie can be allayed with social solidarity but where this is not the case Durkheim maintains that a division of labour, of whatever kind, cannot bring forth social solidarity by itself. This is because where anomie is present increased social regulation is called for; indeed it is the only solution whatever the social structural arrangements (Durkheim 1984, p. 368). Agnew (1995, p. 64) followed this line of reasoning when arguing for increased levels of "social support" to cope with strain in relation to youth crime. What Durkheim and Agnew fail to do is to seriously consider the inner world of those subject to anomie. This is a major failure not least because it results in a rather undeveloped anthropology i.e. account of both the person and of humanity in general.

Anomie is, however, always noted as something out of the ordinary. Durkheim maintains that the division of labour will always work against anomie and that anomic persons (notably criminals) are, in effect, challenging the existing social relations. In this sense anomie is a form of rebellion. The only sure remedy for anomie is increased social interdependence and regulation. Moreover, anomic persons need to be publicly censured for their failure to maintain their obligations to the social body (Durkheim 1984, p. 85). The criminal's failure to support the collective consciousness deserves the legal sanction of punishment. Crime in this sense has both a tangible political dimension but also a metaphysical one too. The institution of punishment is, in the Durkheimian model, both necessary to preserve social solidarity but also a channel for the violent emotions of the community. Punishment is conceived of by Durkheim as another form of submission; and a route to the true freedom that is only possible through social solidarity. As Lukes and Prabhat (2012, p. 367) put it: "Law involves some institutionalized means for publicly declaring and enforcing norms. The organization and institutionalization of law renders it highly visible. Law 'is nothing more than the most stable and precise element in this very organization. ... Thus we may be sure to find reflected in the law all the essential varieties of social solidarity.'" Durkheim seeks ways to put "social solidarity" into operation. He says that 'we must therefore substitute for this internal datum, which escapes us, an external one which symbolizes it and then study the former through the latter. That visible symbol is the law.'" Durkheim thought that violence could be eliminated through a social solidarity that reflects the positive conscience collective and upholds order. This order, though authoritarian, would also be the guarantor of civic life and therefore ought to be welcomed as the protector of individual personhood and community continuity.

### **3. Habermas**

Habermas (1995, p. 285) maintains that: "(Marx, Durkheim and Weber explain systematic pathologies of modernization, such as) ...when forms of economic and administrative rationality encroach upon areas of life whose internal communicative structures cannot be rationalized according to those criteria." Yet Habermas (1995, p. 84) is also very clear, when discussing Durkheim and the development of organic solidarity, that the autonomy that comes with organic solidarity is largely focused upon "reflecting self-understanding" wherein solidarity is no longer secured by a "prior value consensus but ... achieved by virtue of individual efforts." The life of organic solidarity is also the life of the mind, rationalism and negotiated meaning. The legal form it throws up too is one of complex juridification processes, legal



validity and questions surrounding the legitimacy of law (Killion 2010, p. 1). Life is complex and so is the law that preserves civic order under states of organic solidarity; and this stands in marked contrast to the, comparatively, straightforward existence enjoyed under mechanical solidarity. There are, Habermas (1995, p. 91-88) maintains, complexities that occur under social conditions of organic solidarity that simply do not apply under social conditions of mechanical solidarity.

#### 4. An uncanny insight

For Heidegger the essential quality of thought was simply what it means to inhabit a meaningful world. However, he thought of meaningfulness and the forging of meaningfulness as essentially fragile and finite. The finite is revealed in the ways in which meaningful experiences can be fleeting. His work on this process may be found in Sartre's notion of nausea (Sartre 1964). Underpinning Heidegger's ideas about experience and finitude is a less defined notion of anxiety or *angst*. *Angst* being best understood in terms of the way in our ordinary lives we come to face the profound truth of our existence; with a sense of unease. There is strangeness to this activity of inhabiting our deepest sense of self. Heidegger (1979, p. 188) says that in this *angst* we get a sense of *unheimlich*. The English translation was often given as "un-homely" but is best rendered in terms of a feeling of un-comfortableness, strangeness and unsettledness. In any case *unheimlich* is now usually translated as "uncanny" with an emphasis on the idea of *unfamiliarity*. It follows that when we come across the finite and fragile nature of meaningfulness in our everyday lives we are said to detect un-comfortableness in that encounter. Heidegger's *unheimlichkeit* is essentially about our human existential state and the fundamental human relationship with finitude: it is about *being* uncanny not about *feeling* uncanny. It is an important existentialist insight although Heidegger unfortunately never fully defined the term technically in his writings. However, in *Sein und Zeit* (Heidegger 2006, p. 188) he stated: "In der Angst ist einem Unheimlich" which is best rendered in English as "in anxiety one is uncanny." It is not an easy state of being to inhabit.

In its earliest incarnation (in *Sein und Zeit*) *unheimlich* relates to being or feeling, *angst*. It is portrayed as, what philosophers call, an affective phenomenon. However, in Heidegger it has a focus on the existential and the ontological in that it is directed at an analysis of human essence. *Unheimlich* does not only refer to a feeling but to a feeling which illustrates a characteristic of human essence: it has a deeper sense. Hubert Dreyfus (1991, p. 37) argued that *unheimlich* signifies that: "human beings can never be at home in the world." In Heidegger's later work *unheimlich* is given a more central role though its sense is similarly opaque. Heidegger (2006, p. 161) uses *unheimlichkeit* both in his lecture on Sophocles' *Antigone* and seminally in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*; wherein he terms *unheimlich* "the basic trait of human essence into which every other trait must be drawn." It thereby affords it, according to Lacoue-Labarthe (1993), an existential and ontological centrality as something which is essential to human essence and the "estrangement of the human." Heidegger (1998) also makes reference to *unheimlich* in his *Parmenides* lectures. It is important to note the persistence of the term *unheimlich* in Heidegger's work over time: it is a key technical term in his corpus. It provides an important insight for him in terms of what we might term the limitations of meaningfulness and on the empirical basis of human self-understanding.

Sigmund Freud also wrote of *das Unheimlich* and shifted the emphasis away from aesthetics and towards the self; and re-oriented it in terms of his own work into psychoanalysis. Freud understood *unheimlich*, as a sense of un-familiarity that also included familiarity. In Freud *unheimlich* is the familiar, but strangely so. Freud understands it as something familiar, now become unfamiliar, through an internal mental process of repression (and we note the psychoanalytical usage here). The uncanny (*unheimlich*) is a process, or sense, which relates to the way in which the

familiar and the unfamiliar are *mixed*. However, Freud and Heidegger were not close and there is little evidence that Heidegger ever read Freud's work (Krell 1997, p. 101). So we should note Freud's use of *das Unheimlich* but beware too much emphasis on an inter-textual approach or a cod-hermeneutics of *unheimlich*. It is a term used commonly in the German language but it is quite unlikely that Heidegger was not aware of Freud's essay of 1919 (Freud 2003). Moreover, Heidegger's sense affords far more emphasis upon the ability of individuals to understand the notion of *un-* in the uncanny, since it seems to demarcate the meaningful from the un-meaningful. In other words it sets the parameters of the meaningful. It is important in determining the limits of self-understanding and yet is part of that self-understanding. Individuals become uncanny only when they fail to grasp their own innate un-canniness. *Unheimlich* points to a self-estrangement essential to human existence: and it is what defines who and what we are. It is in this sense existential. It is precisely because we are unintelligible to ourselves that we strive to make our existence intelligible.

It is the striving for intelligibility that Heidegger terms *Dasein*. The notion that human beings always try and make their being intelligible is at the heart of Heidegger's existentialism. It is a *sine qua non* in the Heideggerian account that in the activity of understanding being that which is undertaking the understanding cannot fully grasp itself or its own finitude. *Dasein* requires a notion of what we might term reflexive finitude i.e. a reflexive finitude in our own sense-making, or if you like, a radical, and essential, deficit in our self-understanding. We can never render our uncanniness intelligible whatever we do as our ability to make sense of things is essentially flawed. Heidegger's insight is in noting that uncanniness not merely refers to a type of experience, or sense, but that it is an essential element in our essence that ensures that such experiences, or senses, are an ever-present and necessary aspect of our lives. Uncanniness (*unheimlichkeit*) explains a finitude in human existence and should be understood as such, rather than as a mere affective phenomenon. In short, Heidegger's account of *unheimlichkeit* is part of a broader ontological approach within his philosophy which addresses the central issues of just what it means to make things meaningful and what counts for there to be an understanding of being at all and what are the conditions for *Dasein*. Heidegger's existentialism is about the notion of making the world one's own, even though the world itself cannot be altered or fully known, and the realization that such a life is forever a striving for knowledge and being. This point has been made, at length by von Herrmann (1985). Our encounters with phenomenon (which are essentially what we might term carriers of meaning) are the basis of being. Heidegger shows us how through our association with phenomenon we come to see how these phenomena coincide with that which is indicated (von Herrmann 1985, p. 113). This insight (that signs are not merely a substitute for what is indicated but actually an indication of what is already indicated) entails a radical hermeneutical approach to knowledge and being. The phenomenon of the world is primordial and indeed is prior to our phenomenological exposure to being (Sein). We manifest as *das Seiende im Ganzen* (beings in a whole). However, as Crewe (2009, p. 21) notes: "*Dasein* is phenomenological; it emerges from our experience, that is, from our experience of ourselves and of others in the world. Hence *Dasein* is not an individual human, but the property of *individuals* in virtue of their *Being* that is *universal* in humans. What is fundamental to us is in our experience of ourselves and others in the world." So *Dasein* is only possible where its own self-understanding is reflexively finite in regard to understanding its own finitude-ness. This is *unheimlichkeit* - the reflexive understanding of our own finitude towards *Dasein*. It is the constant imperfection that is the central aspect of all human understanding. We are what we are precisely because we cannot grasp our own uncanniness (McGuirk 2010).

## 5. Capitalism, organic solidarity, *unheimlichkeit* and strain

The issues that flow from this concept of *unheimlichkeit*, in Heidegger, can be related to the social processes detailed by Durkheim and Marx and elaborated by Habermas and Merton. To some extent these thinkers are all drawing water from the same well. All of them concerned primarily with life conditions existing under what we might choose to call capitalist social relations, organic solidarity, the modern world, our contemporary polity. *Unheimlichkeit* is a rather intellectual notion yet it is one that, however, ill-defined by either Heidegger or Freud, seems to resonate with the negotiated sense of meaning that Habermas highlighted in the Durkheim's *Division of Labour*. Moreover, Marx's sense of alienation is also a psychic state associated with over-regulation which chimes with the innate mental fragility of *unheimlichkeit*. It is easy to criticise Merton as being too taken with the economic conditions of mid-twentieth century America and for neglecting the inner life of persons within his general strain theory. The usefulness of *unheimlichkeit* is in its potential to furnish a map of the mental life of persons. If we follow the Freudian version of *unheimlichkeit* moreover we note the idea of a sense of unfamiliarity which also included familiarity: a sense of complexity. This difficult and complicated sense (*unheimlichkeit*) is surely exacerbated in the attenuated existential environment pertaining to late modernity. Much of Durkheim's work is concerned to integrate individuals through social regulation but where that regulation is absent, or wanting, surely some form of alienation (or anomie) might follow. The cognitive dissonance, in the sense of a form of mental stress, within our understanding we might also term *unheimlichkeit*: and see it as a limit on our ability to see the world clearly and negotiate life successfully and set goals for ourselves within it. It seems to highlight the difficulty of understanding ourselves in the world. Therefore, of the five categories Merton sets out in his typology of modes of individual adaption (conformity; innovation; ritualism; retreatism; rebellion) it is retreatism primarily which looks ripe for reconsideration in the light of *unheimlichkeit*. We must first recall that Merton did not see economics as the main cause of crime so much as crime being the failure to integrate one's own culturally derived goals and the ability to achieve them, given existing institutional means. In this limited sense Merton sets up an existential question for the individual. *How am I to live, and choose to live, in the future given the goals that the world sets out for me?* He is concerned with the inner life and individual motivation of individuals. It is no surprise, therefore, that he saw failure to integrate one's aspirant goals, and the legitimate means of achieving them, as giving rise in the Mertonian account, in Colin Sumner's (1984, p. 121) words, to: "Psychopathology ... retained as an operative concept." Moreover, as Sumner (1984, p. 78) also notes Merton's: "concept of the unanticipated consequences of social action ... and (concept) of the idiosyncratic deviant." This state of psychopathology ushered in by the unexpected outcomes of social action needs to be reinserted into the way we read Merton. For Merton though there is the social system level and the materially generated desire for personal progress and fulfilment at the macro but there is also the micro world of individual and idiosyncratic psychic life, not all of it well resolved, and much of it confusing and uncertain. The inner world of persons is ever familiar, ever unfamiliar. In many ways it is the world of *unheimlichkeit*. Indeed, the capitalist world would seem to exacerbate the problem in forever altering our needs and desires.

## 6. Action in Heidegger

Let us examine the dominant causal account of action, as exemplified by Donald Davidson (2001) because it helps us better understand both Merton's technical account of strain theory and Heidegger's understanding of the human condition. Davidson's (2001, pp. 3-4) view is that a reason for action consists of: "having some sort of pro-attitude towards actions of a certain kind and *believing* (or knowing, perceiving, noticing, remembering) an action is of that kind." Pro-

attitudes are best understood as wants, urges and desires and, if you like, the sort of goals set out by Merton. In Davidson when a person has a reason to perform an action they have a desire, (i.e. of the type motivation that encompasses wants, urges and desires), to perform a certain sort of action and has a corresponding belief, (i.e. perception or knowledge), that the particular action under consideration is of the preferred sort. He states that it is the combination of a pro-attitude and its allied belief (i.e. perception or knowledge) are the essential reason for action. Moreover, if we can explain the primary reason for any action then we would have explained the action too. This is compatible with the view set out by Heidegger (1988) and Davidson (2001) for it seems able to accommodate both his behaviourist account which posits action is socially conditioned and his analytical account that argues that action is conditioned by personal understanding and which sees mental states as having the primary role in any account of action. However, though Heidegger had behaviourist elements in his work his dominant view was that such stimuli were only possible because of our capacity to both understand ourselves and our own environment and therefore able, in turn, to determine how things matter to individuals and affect them (Dreyfus 1991). In Heidegger it is deliberation and the mental states that it ushers forth that determine our actions inasmuch as they allow things to matter to persons. This is also an account of human motivation (Davis 2007). Heidegger puts a lot of stress upon our capacity for reflection to account for action or put another way that our actions are caused by prior mental events. Heidegger's account of action upholds a reciprocal *interdependence* of both active and passive elements to elaborate a nuanced notion of causality which was later picked up by Merleau-Ponty (2006, p. 130). Heidegger saw our self-understanding, or lack of it, as important in understanding the things we are drawn towards. Heidegger understood agency as being configured in terms of a passive aspect, i.e. various elements and activities in the world and an active aspect, i.e. which entails a self-understanding that allows such things to matter to individuals.

As we saw with the concept of *unheimlichkeit* the picture Heidegger paints seems to coincide very neatly with the work of Merton; supplementing it with a sophisticated anthropology and furnishing it with a richer set of tones. In linking action to mental processes Heidegger gives us a view of the individual, in the retreatism category, which has real explanatory force. Such persons do not act because they are not motivated to. They have no desire, want, or urge to set goals and engage in pro-attitudinal thinking and to begin to act in a way directed at positive outcomes. Moreover, in his *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* Heidegger sets out a behaviourist account that posits that to some extent action is socially conditioned which would seem to support Merton's notion of how social structures impose themselves upon the values that individuals come to uphold (Merton 1993, pp. 199-200).

## 7. Conclusion

Merton showed how his retreatism category is associated with those who duck out of the complexity of the modern world with its meaning-making and familiar-unfamiliar and the understanding of forever being unintelligible to ourselves. Persons in the retreatism category typically present as "tramps, alcoholics, drug addicts and psychotics" who make up a large percentage of the criminal population. Moreover, as I previously noted (Amatrudo 2009, p. 21), Merton never saw the issue of drug addiction and life lived on the streets as causing anomie: rather they are to be understood as being the result of anomie. Retreatism is the escape mechanism used by individuals living in societies characterised by organic solidarity and capitalist economic relations come to resolve their internal conflicts between both the external moral constraints against illegitimate means and their failure to succeed by legitimate means. This understanding is internal and it is existential. Maybe this is the truer notion Merton had in mind and not the one heavily indebted

to sub-cultural theory which resolves the obvious indeterminacy by giving an *objectivised* sociological reading unable, and unwilling, to ponder the existential issues of the retreatism category (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). So it is to Heidegger we should look for his concept of *unheimlichkeit* and his description of action and motivation seems to give a richer understanding to the work of Merton. When we have done that we recognise that our capitalist world presents us with alienated identities living criminal existences.

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